

BRIEF ON OFFICE PROCEDURE

(PREPARED BY PCPO'S RULING SECTION)

Issues covering in the presentation on Office Procedure

Step	Issue
I	Introduction - Need of Office Procedure.
II	Definition of some of the terms commonly used in Office procedure, viz. Current file, Dak, File, FR, Minute, PUC etc.
III	Maintenance of Dak - a) Receipt of Dak. b) Acknowledgement of Dak. c) Registration of Dak. d) Distribution of Dak.
IV	File Maintenance - a) Standard Process Sheet. b) Level of disposal & Channel of submission. c) Guidelines for Noting. d) Modification of notes & orders. e) Noting on files received from other Departments. f) Oral discussion g) Oral instructions by higher officers. h) Confirmation of oral instructions. i) Filing of papers. j) Arrangement of papers in a case. k) Referencing. l) Linking of files. m) Use of urgency grading.
V	Forms and Procedure of Communication - a) Forms of communication, viz. letter, Demi-official letter, office memorandum, inter-departmental note, office order, order, notification, resolution, press note, endorsement & minute. b) Single file system (SFS) c) References to Constitutional/Statutory Authorities d) Correspondence with State Governments e) Correspondence with Members of Parliament and VIPs f) Target date for replies
VI	Drafting & Communication - a) Procedure for drafting. b) General instructions for drafting c) Addressing communications to officers by name
VII	File Numbering system - a) File Numbering System. b) Transfer, reconstruction and numbering of files c) Movement of files
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Step	Issue
I	Introduction - Need of Office Procedure. The efficiency of an organization depends largely on evolution of adequate processes and procedures and the ability of its employees to follow them. Accordingly, the efficiency of persons handling official work in a government organization like Railways can be judged by their ability to dispose of matters - mostly receipts, cases etc. with speed and quality, following the procedures prescribed for the purpose. The ultimate object of all Government business is to meet the citizens' needs and further their welfare. At the same time, those who are accountable for fair conduct of business have to ensure that public funds are managed with utmost care and prudence. It is, therefore, necessary, in each case, to keep appropriate record not only of what has been done but also of why it was so done. There is no prescribed MOP for Zonal Railways issued by Board. However, the procedure prescribed in CSMOP has been suitably adopted for this purpose.
II	Definition of some of the terms commonly used in Office procedure, viz. Current file, Dak, File, FR, Minute, PUC etc. Correspondence portion - the portion of file containing receipts and office copies of the communications issued from the file include self-contained interdepartmental notes but excluding those recorded on the notes portion of the file itself. Current file - A file on which action is not yet complete. Dak - All communication received/issued by an office/department. Dealing hand - Any functionary entrusted with initial examination. Docketing - Making of entries in the notes portion of a file about the serial number assigned to each item of correspondence (whether receipt or issue) for its identification. File - a collection of papers on a specific subject, assigned a number and consisting of one or more of the following parts: (a) Notes; (b) Correspondence; (c) Appendices to Notes/ correspondence. Fresh Receipt (FR) - Any subsequent receipt on a case which brings in additional information. Messenger Book - A record of particulars of despatch of non-postal communications and their receipt by the addressees. Minute - a note recorded by the President, the Vice-President, the Prime Minister or a Minister. Note - The remarks recorded on a case to facilitate its examination and decision. Paper Under Consideration (PUC) - A receipt pertaining to a case, the consideration of which is the subject matter of the case.
III	Maintenance of Dak - a) Receipt of Dak- During office hrs., the entire dak will be received either in CR or respective Departments. However, dak addressed by name will be received by the respective personal staff. In case, an officer is on leave or on training/tour or having retired or left the office after completion of his tenure, the incumbent or the personal staff concerned or the link officer or the officer just below the officer concerned, dealing with the subject will receive the immediate/important references, except confidential letters for which link officer arrangement will be utilized. In case none of the above mentioned officers are in position, the CR will receive such letters. Outside the office hours, dak will be received by the addressee himself, if

	otherwise available. E-mails received in the Department will be downloaded centrally by the Department and forward the same to the officer concerned. b) Acknowledgement of Dak - the receipt of dak, in person, will be acknowledged by the recipient signing his name in full and in ink with date and designation. In e-office acknowledgement will be self generated. c) Registration of Dak - All dak should be registered with details containing date-wise serial no. d) Distribution of Dak- The receipts may be forwarded to the officer/section concerned. In case of ambiguity, the correspondence may be forwarded as per the instructions of the appropriate authority.
IV	File Maintenance - a) Standard Process Sheet - For dealing with cases of repetitive nature e.g. leave sanction, PF Advances, HBA etc., standard process sheets may be devised by the department. No notes need be recorded in such cases. b) Level of disposal & Channel of submission - Ideally, The number of levels through which a file passes for a decision shall not exceed four. However, there should be detailed guidelines regarding levels of decision making. Wherever level jumping is done in respect of any category of cases, each such case on its return, will pass through all the levels jumped over, who in suitable cases could resubmit the cases for reconsideration. In case of urgent matters, the decisions may be conveyed directly to the officer concerned for implementation, who after doing the same, shall bring it to the notice of the levels of officers, that have been jumped in the hierarchy. c) Guidelines for Noting - All notes shall be concise and to the point. Additional material, if any, may be placed in the appendix. Black or Blue ink shall be used by all categories of staff and officers. In case of hand written noting, only black or blue ink shall be used. The dealing hand shall append full signature, name and date on the left below the note. An officer shall append full signature on the right hand side of the note with name, designation and date. In an electronic environment digital signature will be appended at each level. All notes on policy matters should be self-contained with specific views. d) Modification of notes & orders - senior officers should not require any modification in, or replacement of, the notes recorded by their juniors once they have been submitted to them. Instead, the higher officers should record their own notes giving their views on the subject, where necessary correcting or modifying the facts given in earlier notes. Pasting over a note or a portion of it to conceal, shall not be done e) Noting on files received from other Departments - If the reference seeks the opinion, ruling or concurrence of the receiving Department and requires detailed examination, such examination may be done separately through routine notes on a separate file (which will be created by the receiving Department). Only the final result will be recorded on the file by the officer concerned f) Oral discussion - All points emerging from discussions (including telephonic discussions) between two or more officers of the same Department or from discussions between officers of different Departments, and the conclusions reached shall be recorded precisely on the relevant file at the earliest, by the officer authorizing action. g) Oral instructions by higher officers - Where an officer is giving direction (including telephonic direction) for taking action in any case in respect of

matters on which the officer or subordinate has powers to decide, the subordinate shall ordinarily do so in writing. If, however, the circumstances of the case are such that there is no time for giving the instructions in writing, they should follow it up by a written confirmation at the earliest.

- h) Confirmation of oral instructions - If an officer seeks confirmation of oral instructions given by his superior, the latter should confirm it in writing whenever such confirmation is sought.
- i) Filing of papers - Papers required to be filed will be punched neatly on the left hand top corner and tagged onto the appropriate part of the file viz. notes, correspondence, appendix to notes and appendix to correspondence, in chronological order, from right to left. Both 'notes portion' and 'correspondence portion' will be placed in a single file cover.
- j) Arrangement of papers in a case. Reference to previous communications should invariably indicate in the fresh receipt, if there is a mention about it. When the 'notes' plus the 'correspondence' portion of the file become bulky (say exceeds 150-200 pages), it will be marked 'Volume I'. Further papers on the subject will be added to the new volume of the same file, which will be marked 'Volume II', and so on. On top of the first page of the note portion in each volume of the file, file number, name of the Department, name of branch/section subject of the file and classification of file will be mentioned. A similar procedure will be followed on file cover also.
- k) Referencing - Every page in each part of the file (viz. Notes, correspondence, appendix to notes and appendix to correspondence) will be consecutively numbered in separate series on the top right hand corner. The drafts of letters issued having crucial policy, financial and vigilance implications, where the drafts have been changed by Senior Officers in the process of movement of files upwards, barring grammatical corrections should also form a part of the correspondence portion, which shall be numbered ad seriatim. The document under consideration on a file shall be flagged PUC and the latest fresh receipt noted upon, as FR. If there is more than one FR they shall be flagged separately as FR-I, FR-II and so on. To facilitate the identification of reference to documents contained in other files after the removal of linked file(s), the number of the file referred to will be quoted invariably in the note.
- l) Linking of files - If the issues raised in two or more current files are inter-connected, the relevant files shall be linked. After completion of action, the linked files be de-linked after taking relevant extracts.
- m) Use of urgency grading - The urgency grading advised are Immediate, Priority and Top Priority. The label Immediate will be used only in cases requiring prompt attention. Amongst the rest, the Priority label will be used for cases which merit disposal in precedence to others of ordinary nature. Top Priority will be applied in extremely urgent cases.

V

Forms and Procedure of Communication -

- a) Forms of communication, viz. letter - A letter begins with the salutation "Sir/Madam" as may be appropriate. , Demi-official letter - demi-official memorandum - It is written in the third person and bears no salutation or supersession except the name and designation of the officer signing it, inter-departmental note - Generally employed for obtaining the advice, views, concurrence or comments of other Departments on a proposal or in seeking clarification of the existing rules, instructions etc., office order -

Normally used for issuing instructions meant for internal administration, e.g., grant of regular leave, distribution of work among officers and sections, appointments and transfers etc., order - Generally used for issuing certain types of financial sanctions and for communicating government orders in disciplinary cases, etc., to the officials concerned, notification - Mostly used in notifying promulgation of statutory rules and orders, appointments and promotions of gazetted officers etc. through publications in the Gazette of India., resolution - s form of communication is used for making public announcement of decisions of government in important matters of policy in e.g. the policy of industrial licensing, appointment of committees or commissions of enquiry., press note - This form is used when it is proposed to give wide publicity to a decision of government., endorsement - This form is used when a receipt has to be returned in original to the sender, or the receipt in original or its copy is sent to another Department or office, for information or action. & minute - A record of discussions is prepared immediately after the meeting and circulated to the other Departments concerned, giving date/time/venue of the meeting held, who chaired the meeting and list of participants, setting out the conclusions reached and indicating the Ministry(s)/Department(s) responsible for taking further action on each conclusion.

- b) Single file system (SFS) - This shall apply to matters which have to be referred by the Non-Administrative office to the Department for seeking a sanction/order, i.e. a decision not within its own delegated powers.
- c) References to Constitutional/Statutory Authorities - References to constitutional and statutory authorities such as Election Commission of India/ Union Public Service Commission etc. shall normally be made from the Ministry in the letter form addressed to Principal Secretary/Secretary of the Commission.
- d) Correspondence with State Governments - Communications on the subjects which clearly relate to the business of a particular Department shall normally be addressed to the Secretary of that Department. Other communications including those of special nature or importance warranting attention at higher levels may be addressed to the Chief Secretary. Demi-official letters may also be sent to officers of State Governments.
- e) Correspondence with Members of Parliament and VIPs - Communications received from Members of Parliament and VIPs should be attended to promptly.
- f) Target date for replies - In all important matters in which State Governments, Departments of the Central Government, or other offices, public bodies or individuals are consulted, time limit for replies may ordinarily be specified. On expiry of the specified date, orders of the appropriate authority may be obtained on whether the offices, whose replies have not been received, may be allowed an extension of time or whether the matter may be processed on the basis of the information available, without waiting for their replies.

VI

Drafting & Communication -

- a) Procedure for drafting - Draft is not required to be prepared in straight-forward cases or those for which standard forms of communication exist. A draft shall be clear and concise. The number and date of the last communication in the series, and if this is not from the addressee, his last communication on the subject, shall always be referred to. Where it is necessary to refer to more than one communication or a series of

communications, this shall be done on the margin of the draft. When two or more communications are to issue from the same file on the same date, a separate serial number may be inserted before the numeral identifying the year to avoid confusion in reference, e.g., A-11011/5(I)/2001-Est., A-11011/5(II)/2001-Est. The name, designation, telephone number, fax number and e-mail (wherever applicable) of the officer signing the communication shall be indicated in the communication. A draft should be typed in double space, in half margin and on both sides of the paper. A flag bearing the words 'Draft for Approval' should be attached to the draft. When more than one draft is submitted at the same time, they should be numbered I, II, III and so on. The following general principles may be followed by all concerned:—

- (i) No more words that are necessary to express one's meaning should be used. Failure to do so is likely to obscure the correct meaning and to tax the reader.
- (ii) Superfluous adjectives, adverbs, and round about phrases should not be used.
- (iii) Familiar words should be preferred to the farfetched as the former are more likely to be readily understood.
- (iv) Words with a precise meaning should be preferred to those that are vague. This will serve to convey one's thoughts more clearly.
- (v) Concrete words should be preferred to abstract words for they are more likely to have precise meaning.
- b) Addressing communications to officers by name - Normally no communication, other than that of a classified nature or a demi-official letter, shall be addressed or marked to an officer by name, unless it is intended that the matter raised therein shall receive his personal attention either because of its special nature, urgency or importance, or because some ground has already been covered by personal discussions with him and he would be in a better position to deal with it.

VII File Numbering system -

- a) File Numbering System - Normally, no files should be opened for dealing with receipts of routine nature. The following two file numbering systems may be used:-
 - (i) Functional file numbering system -
 - (ii) Subject classification based file numbering system-
 - (iii) Part File -
 - (iv) Unique e-file number:
- b) Transfer, reconstruction and numbering of files - Whenever work is transferred from one department/section to another, the former shall transfer all the related records including file both current and closed to the latter. In case of transfer of files from one Department to the other a list will be prepared and approval of the Head of the Department taken. A paper based file will be reconstructed if it is misplaced. The copies of the various correspondences will be obtained from the corresponding department and papers will be arranged in chronological orders and a new duplicate file prepared. A self-contained note will be prepared based on the correspondences.
- c) Movement of files - Movement of files shall be entered in the file movement register in the format to be decided by the Department concerned through departmental instructions. This may also be done through the electronic based File Tracking System.

VIII	Records Management - a) Activities involved in records management - Records management covers the activities concerning mainly recording, retention, retrieval and disposal by transferring records to Record Room. Each Department is expected to issue Departmental instructions to regulate and review of records b) Record Retention Schedule - To ensure that files etc. are neither prematurely destroyed, nor kept for periods longer than necessary, there should be a Record Retention Schedule (RRS). Presently, RRS prescribed by the DoP&T is being followed uniformly in Railways.
IX	Checks on Delays - a) Timely Disposal of receipts and monitoring of Parliamentary Assurances, Parliament Questions, Applications under RTI Act, MP/VIP References, CAT/Court Cases, etc. - Time Limits will be fixed for disposal of as many types of cases as possible handled in the Department through departmental instructions. As a general rule, no official shall keep a case pending for more than 7 working days unless higher limits have been prescribed for specific types of cases through departmental instructions. In case of a case remaining with an official for more than the stipulated time limit, an explanation for keeping it pending shall be recorded on the note portion by him. The system of exception reporting will be introduced to monitor the disposal of receipts. For timely disposal and monitoring of Parliament Assurances, Parliament Questions, Applications under RTI Act, MP/VIP References, Judicial/quasi-judicial, etc. each department shall maintain separate records of such cases. E-Governance methods, suiting to the requirements, should also be adopted for monitoring and tracking of government work.

e-Office Terminology

63. **Capture** means Registration, Classification, Addition of metadata and storage of a file and/or record in a system that manages them all.
64. **Create** means creation of a new e-file or e-receipt.
65. **'Digitization'** means conversion of physical files / record/document into electronic form and managing the newly created electronic files and records i.e. which can be processed by a Computer/electronic device.
66. **Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)/e-sign** – It is a system of authentication of any electronic record by a subscriber by means of an electronic method of signing like usage of DSC and e-sign. The Information Technology Act, 2000 & the subsequent Amendment Act, 2008 provides for use of digital signatures (and now termed as electronic signatures) on the documents submitted in electronic form in order to ensure the security and authenticity of the documents filed electronically. An electronic (digital) signature is the electronic equivalent of a handwritten signature, verifying the authenticity of electronic documents. These electronic signatures are stored in a certificate which stores the personal information of the owner which is then imported to a physical device (USB Token, floppy disk, CD etc.). Following precaution may be taken while using DSC:
- Dos:**
- a) The token (DSC device) containing certificate should be preserved in safe custody by the owner of the certificate.
 - b) If the token is lost, the concerned certifying authority (CA) should be informed and requested for the revocation of the certificate immediately.
 - c) The owner should always ensure to protect the private key with a good password.
- Don'ts:**
- a) The private key protected by a password should never be sent across any network.
 - b) Never delete token objects, as once deleted, objects will never be regained.
67. **e-File** – File Management System or eFile, provides a simplified, accountable, responsive, effective and transparent electronic system for end-to-end processing of any file. The system includes all stages of working on a file, right from registration of an inward receipt to creation of file; to noting, drafting, approval, signing and issuing of a communication of decisions. With this system, the movement of receipts and files becomes seamless with ease of access to end users as every action taken on a receipt or file is recorded electronically. This automation of file plays a very crucial role in both improving the efficiency of decision making and bringing transparency in government.
68. **e-File No.** - A unique number automatically allotted by e-Office System to an electronic-File, at the time of creation of file.
69. **e-Receipt No.-** A unique number automatically allotted by e-Office System to an electronic-Receipt, at the time of registration of receipt electronically.
70. **e-Office** – e-Office is a product suite aimed at transforming the core of the Government functioning, the work culture and work ethics by bringing in more efficiency, transparency, and accountability in Government transactions leading to increased productivity. One of the

key areas of importance in eOffice is to have a uniform & seamless communication channel between the electronic world (user Department implementing eOffice) & the existing physical world (external organizations, citizen etc.). It provides electronic way of doing work for a public servant which includes the elements like e-file, Workflow Automation, Document and Knowledge Management and leads to reduction in use of paper.

71. **eFile Administrator** : eFile Administrator is the identified person in any Department who holds privileged rights to manage all the reference data, transfer of cases, reports permissions, search privileges etc. in case of eFile. In Board's office, RBCC is the eFile administrator.
72. **e-Office Administrator** : eOffice Administrator is the identified user with all the administrative privileges and rights to manage various master/reference-data, and its configuration with all the available applications of eOffice product suite, viz. eFile, eLeave, eTour, PIMS and CAMS. He is the one with the responsibility of creation, mapping, and management of all the organization and user data of the eOffice. In Board's office, only eFile, PIMS modules are running and RBCC is the system administrator.
73. **'e-Recording'** means the process of closing an e-file after action on all the issues considered thereon has been completed and includes operations like attaching all orders/instructions related to the subject, completing references, revising the e-file title, recording rulings (if any) in the Precedent Book, categorizing the e-file.
74. **Internet** – a worldwide system of public computer networks in which users can get information from any other computer (and sometimes talk directly to users at other computers).
75. **Intranet** – a private network with interlinked local area networks using leased lines in the wide area network.
76. **Knowledge Management System** - Government manages large volume of documents of various categories like Policies, Forms, Circulars, Guidelines, etc. Maintaining a central repository of documents provides a one-stop access of all the necessary information required by end-users in the Department. It is a system or framework for managing the organizational processes that create, store and distribute knowledge, as defined by its collective data, information and body of experience. KMS allows users to create and manage e-documents which can be viewed, searched and shared. It is also capable of keeping track of the different versions modified by different users.
77. **Local Area Network** – a network of computers in close proximity to each other in an office building.
78. **Meta-data** – Meta-data are details of information provided in the pre-defined fields for a Dak while registration and / or for a file during its creation. Meta-data stores data about the structure, context and meaning of data.
79. **MIS dashboard** – the snapshot of location of all the e-files and their status at any given point of time.
80. **Portal** – consists of web pages that act as a starting point for using the Web or web-based services.
81. **e-Record** – Any record which is maintained electronically or in digital form.

82. **Registration at entry level:** This means that in eFile, a dak or an inward communication is registered only once at the first point of entry in a Department, whether in the Central Registry or in the personal offices of the Minister, Secretary or any other officer or in the Section.
83. **Registration:** means entering of details of dak at the entry level.
84. **System/e-File Administrator** – a designated officer responsible for maintaining and operating the IT system in an organization. In Board's office, RBCC unit of C&IS Directorates are the System Administrator.
- The responsibilities of the system administrator includes monitoring security, configuration, managing allocation of user names and passwords, monitoring disk space and other resource use, performing backups and setting up new hardware and software, whenever required.
- System Administrator viz C&IS is also responsible for the implementation of the Cyber security policies in Railway Board as per the Government of India's policies.
85. **User** – a person authorized to use e-Office system in a particular Directorate/Branch/Unit.
86. **Version** – the state of a document at some point during its development. A version is usually one of the drafts of a document, or the final document or the software state of development.
87. **Video Conference** – a set of interactive telecommunication technologies that allow locations to interact via two-way video and audio transmissions simultaneously.
88. **Wide Area Network** – spans a large geographic area, such as a state or country. WANs often connect multiple smaller networks, such as Local Area Networks or Metro Area Networks (MANs).
89. **Wi-fi** – Wireless networking technology that uses radio waves to provide wireless high-speed Internet and network connections.
90. **Workflow Automation** – the use of email based software technology to increase the efficiency of a workflow by improving the coordination of the activities of the people involved.

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